AI Overview

May Day in the USA originated from the 1886 nationwide strike for an eight-hour workday, anchored by the violent Haymarket Affair in Chicago. Although International Workers' Day stems from these U.S. events, the U.S. government officially designated Labor Day in September to distance itself from radical labor movements, leaving May 1st to be observed primarily through protests, historical commemoration, and traditional spring, or "May Basket," customs. The Old Farmer's Almanac +3

Key Historical Aspects of May Day in the USA:

- **The 1886 Strike:** In 1884, organized labor unions declared that eight hours would constitute a legal day's work, starting May 1, 1886. On that day, over 300,000 workers nationwide went on strike.
- **Haymarket Affair (1886):** Following police violence at the McCormick Reaper Works, a rally at Chicago's Haymarket Square on May 4 turned deadly when a bomb was thrown at police, leading to a violent clash and the subsequent trial/execution of several labor activists.
- **International Workers' Day Origins:** In 1889, an international federation of socialist groups and unions designated May 1 as a day to honor the "Haymarket Martyrs," establishing it as an international workers' holiday.
- **Relationship with U.S. Labor Day:** To avoid commemorating the Haymarket incident, President Grover Cleveland established Labor Day on the first Monday in September in 1894.
- **Traditional May Day:** Aside from labor history, early American settlers—though restricted by Puritans in some areas—sometimes celebrated with European traditions like dancing around a maypole. In the 19th and 20th centuries, "May Basket Day" was popular, involving leaving, anonymous baskets of flowers on neighbors' doorsteps.
- **"Law Day":** In 1958, President Eisenhower declared May 1 to be "Law Day" to further pivot away from the socialist roots of the international holiday. National Museum of American History +5

Today, May Day in the U.S. is often celebrated by labor activists, immigrant rights groups, and socialists as a day of protest and solidarity, while many schools still mark the date with traditional springtime, maypole activities. The Old Farmer's Almanac +1